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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION
FINANCE
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SMALL BUSINESS

December 13, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Room 8B201
Washington, DC 20554

*WCB
Noted
19/10*

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I understand that tomorrow you will be holding a forum in Washington on teenagers and technology. Because our schedule is full in the Senate with end of year business, I cannot make it to the forum, but I wanted to express my support for this effort.

Forums like this one are an excellent example of the "soft power" of regulators and legislators to convene experts, parents, and kids around the multiple challenges that the digital revolution poses, as well as the opportunities they create to grow, learn, and socialize in healthy ways. As a parent whose kids came of age as the texting, social networking, and multiple devices per person evolution was in its earliest stages, I am happy that they were mature enough to manage their exposure to risk and make the most of the tools these technologies afforded them. But for their kids, and kids growing up today, we need to talk, think, and work together to help them --and their families -- balance our time spent looking at screens, seek out healthy and useful content when we are connected, and behave appropriately and safely in the digital environment.

I understand that part of the agenda for the forum was inspired by a series of articles in the New York Times as well as the bipartisan work and advocacy of your fellow Commissioners. Cyberbullying and privacy risks pose real world threats to our kids and talking about "not doing things online that you know are wrong offline" is a good place to start. Kids are smart and will respond if we reach out to them and involve them in the conversation. They may even teach us some things.

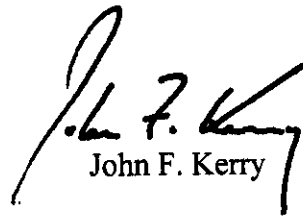
The New York Times series that led in part to this discussion went beyond the physical and social risks to kids to the distracting effect and effect on impatience and concentration of constant digital communications. One article, which actually centered on adults, talked about the benefits that come from thinking when disconnected from technology and free from interruption, as well as the value of enjoying the outdoors in the process. With that in mind, and given that I know you will be encouraging brainstorming, I want to suggest for your discussion an idea I heard recently for a "Digital Sabbath". It may be healthy for families to take one day out of the week and simply disconnect digitally and instead read, spend time together, go for a bike ride, or

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just think, free from interruption. We may find that taking a break from these tools may even help us enjoy them more, put them in their proper perspective, and use them more effectively.

Again, I appreciate and support your effort to help parents and kids better manage our changing world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John F. Kerry". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

John F. Kerry



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

March 29, 2011

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kerry:

I appreciate knowing of your support for the Commission's December 14th *Generation Mobile* forum. This program was a wonderful opportunity for teens, parents, educators, regulators and innovators to exchange essential information about addressing the risks that accompany broadband Internet technology. I believe that we came away with a good understanding of the issues and that the dialogue we initiated during this forum will help all generations reap the opportunities of mobile broadband technology while avoiding many of the pitfalls.

The first panel, entitled "Generation Mobile Speaks," provided direct input from teens, parents and educators. Listening to real stories highlighted the mixed blessing of our mobile generation. As we heard, broadband has saved lives and provided us with security and educational opportunities, but we also learned the downside of this sometimes over-connected age. Cyberbullying, distracted driving, sexting, and addiction are very real problems. Parents acknowledged that they, not the government, must do more to help their young ones navigate the dangers.

Panel II, "Ask the Experts," revealed the many tools that are available to parents to help ensure their children's safety while online. One important point that emerged from this panel is that parents and guardians too often are unaware of these resources. We heard the need for greater digital education so parents can better monitor their children's online activity. All panelists agreed that digital literacy is a shared responsibility among parents, schools, and kids. Parents need to be more vigilant and, as you state in your letter, work with their children and involve them in the conversation. Government's role can be to help facilitate the dialogue.

I look forward to working with you during the next year on this and many of the other communications issues before the Commission. Thank you once again for your leadership and support.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski